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Good Afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Carol Lenz. I am a member of Fox Cities Advocates for Public Education. The fact that we have this Commission gives us hope.

As I looked over the Commission's Scope Statement, I see that most of the issues listed have been a concern for many years now.

The inequity of general aid funding and revenue limits has been a problem since the 1990's. At one time, the goal was for state aids to provide 66% of public school funding. Currently, it stands at 55% in the six Fox Cities schools we track and an average of approximately 45 percent statewide. The shortfall per student in the Fox Cities districts now averages \$255.

<https://sites.google.com/view/fox-cities-advocates-4-pub-ed>

Districts continue to struggle with funding fixed costs, the ever-increasing costs of transportation, high-cost categorical aid, funding summer school and early childhood programs and recruiting and retaining teachers.

Average teacher salaries in Wisconsin are down 6.8% from what they were prior to the 2009-10 school year, contributing to staff shortages.

https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17_211.60.asp

Very little has been done on the state level to address these issues. Instead, policies adopted in the last few years have made many of these problems harder to solve.

As well-intended as it was, the state decided to fund a second private school system without first analyzing the long-term impact of those decisions on public schools.

Now, we have underfunded public schools, which we are constitutionally required to fund, that are still facing all those same problems. And, we have an unsustainable choice program that may well end up costing over \$1 billion a year. The cost to Fox Cities citizens alone in the past five years now totals over \$9 million. Unfortunately, most citizens are not aware of this.

Now what?

1. Every legislator needs to be reminded of the oath they took to uphold the Wisconsin Constitution. It is their constitutional responsibility to equitably fund public education. This Commission is a good start.
2. We need to again work toward the goal of two-thirds state general aid funding for public schools. Based on the most recent legislative session, it sounds like we have a lot of money to spend. It is time to reinvest in our public schools. Public
3. Study the Fair Funding proposal by DPI that already has suggestions for many of the funding issues. <https://dpi.wi.gov/budget/fairfunding/fags>
4. Trust in local control. Resume an annual inflationary increase in the revenue limit. Public schools cannot operate effectively with uncertainty from budget to budget.
5. Special education reimbursement rates have been frozen for a decade now and need to increase to at least 30% of costs.
6. Transparency is vital in a democracy. The public needs to be informed as to how their tax dollars are being spent. Passage of AB267 and SB183 would be a step in the right direction.
7. Phase out school choice vouchers. There is no evidence that the program improves student learning. Before its adoption, there was no long-term study of its financial sustainability and impact on public schools.
8. Every legislator also takes an oath to uphold the U.S. Constitution. Some religions teach that women are not equal to men or that LGBTQ individuals are not entitled to marriage equality or that women do not have reproductive rights. A person's religious beliefs are just that, personal. Public money should not be used to promote beliefs that contradict our Constitution.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I will leave a copy of my testimony, including sources, with the Committee.